

Processes of Change: Translation, Metamorphosis, and Conversion

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“Change alone is eternal, perpetual, immortal.” – Arthur Schopenhauer

While Schopenhauer’s words reflect the expansiveness of change, they simultaneously efface its complexity. Change can be slow, imperceptible to those immersed in its machinations and only obvious to those from the privileged position of the future. Or change can be instantaneous, urgent but equally opaque due to its immediacy. This issue of *WRECK* aims to acknowledge the complexity of change by exploring the processes of translation, metamorphosis, and conversion in art and visual culture. Though comparable, these processes are divergent in ways that allow for a nuanced theorizing of change. Translation implies a negotiation between removal and addition, loss and gain, excess and lack. Metamorphosis involves a transformation in form, shape, or substance, often implicating an external force or agent. Conversion suggests a shifting of position, orientation, or perspective as well as an alteration of properties. Frequently inextricable from the social and political, these processes of change can be imbricated in revolution, reformation, and innovation. Characterized by mobility, temporality, and uncertainty, they can also act as the catalysts for shifts in artistic/architectural practices and vocabularies. We posit that a focus on the processes of change can be useful for rethinking many of the issues occupying the visual arts and the art historical discipline, including globalization, intermediality, materiality, and agency, among others.

The articles in this issue of *WRECK* engage with the processes of change from a variety of historical, geographic, and medial perspectives. In “**Clean Air, Clean Water: Vapourization and the Anonymous Corpse in Teresa Margolles’ *Plancha***,” Daniella E. Sanader explores the ways in which Margolles mobilizes water in changing states to implicate the spectator sensorially in “a political and phenomenological strategy of artistic practice.” For Sanader, the atmospheric extension of the vapourized morgue water that is at the center of Margolles’ work (exhibited in Montreal at DHC/ART in early 2012) serves to disrupt the spectator as subject and to interrogate issues of contamination, decay, and violence.

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Also dealing with the transformative powers of water, albeit from a drastically different perspective, Paige Ambroziak's article, "**Poussin's Echo of Ovid**," provides a close examination of the story of Narcissus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. With Nicolas Poussin's 1630 painting *The Empire of Flora* as her starting point, Ambroziak focuses on the role of Echo, and particularly the vocal reflexivity she introduces to the myth, in Narcissus' ultimate transformation. Presenting Echo, the bearer of distorted speech, as a "vessel of the unconscious," Ambroziak's essay intersects with Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to shed light on Narcissus' desires and eventual dissolution.

In his essay, "**Love in the Shadow of the Original**," Jeff O'Brien examines the rhetoric of translation as a productive act. Through a close reading of Gayatri Spivak's preface to Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, he argues that the meaning produced in the affective and productive act of translation is located within the rhetorical gaps of both the original and translated work.

Also engaging with the issue of translation, Vytas Narusevicius considers the manifold layers of this process as enacted by Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting of the *Tower of Babel*. In "**The Labours of Translation: Towards Utopia in Bruegel's Tower**

of Babel," he argues that the multiple labours of translation evident in the painting imply both a challenge to the authority of the original as well as highlighting the importance of translation for social change. In the process, Narusevicius foregrounds the act of interpreting an artwork as itself an act of translation.

Finally, by comparing photographs of the congresses of the National-Socialist Party held in Nuremberg in the 1920s and 30s with those of present-day events held at the same site, Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande argues for an interdependence between spatial politics and image politics in the conversion of social space. "**The Spatialization of Image Politics: The Nazi Party Grounds in Nuremberg**" also highlights photography's complex temporal play, arguing that in creating an image of how the past will be understood, "photography sanctions the subordination of events to their representation."

Also included in this issue of *WRECK* are Matthew Ryan Smith's review of the book, *Shapeshifting: Transformations in Native American Art*, edited by Karen Kramer Russell, as well as Jayne Wilkinson's review of the exhibitions *Voyage, or Three Years at Sea, Part IV* and *Lured* held at the Charles H. Scott Gallery and the Vancouver Maritime Museum respectively.